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## *"Be Subject to One Another Out of Reverence for Christ"*

**An article from the Cathedral Times  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler**

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.--Ephesians 5.21

We've got a problem right now in the Episcopal Church. Our church's legislative process, though necessary, also tends to produce "winners" and "losers." It is as if a family of five has just made a decision based on a 3-2 vote. Various sides, or factions, tend to question the motives of one another. One side is perceived as gloating; another side is perceived as complaining. Still another side is confused. Another side wants to avoid everything.

In the last three weeks, the Episcopal Church has garnered more media attention than most of us have ever known. I am not sure that all attention is good. Some say that even bad press is good press, but I'm not so sure. The press often delivers the voices of those most dis-affected and worried. The media can do a great job of reporting facts, but its slant and commentary can also raise public anxiety in unhealthy ways.

Most of us reading this newsletter love the Episcopal Church. Some of us were raised in this beautiful atmosphere of faith and love, Bible and worship, and we would not know church without this heritage. Others of us chose the Episcopal Church. We were looking for orthodoxy, but also looking for breadth and depth; we were looking for faith, but also looking for freedom.

Now, we are in the news. Some of us are elated about the events of General Convention. Others of us are devastated. Some of us are still confused about what occurred and what did not occur. Some of the people who are elated are best friends, even spouses, of the persons who are devastated.

It will be my goal, in the next chapter of life at the Cathedral of St. Philip, to define what we stand for. The issue of homosexuality in the Church has taken center stage in the media attention of the world; but I am eager "to press on toward the goal of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3.12).

What do we stand for? We stand for classical Christian faith: God has become flesh in Jesus Christ, who is our Lord and Savior. We are all sinners, but God has loved us, and saved us, in Jesus Christ. That salvation has given each of us a new identity; we are called to unity in our common allegiance to Jesus Christ. We read and study and love the Bible, the document of sixty-six books that describes God's search for humanity, generation after generation. We pray together. We study together. We serve the world together.

We also stand for marriage. Yes, I know that the impression across the country right now is that the Episcopal Church is confused about that. Yes, we did give consent to the consecration of a bishop-elect in New Hampshire who is gay. But that consent does not change our commitment to, and reverence for, the institution of marriage. Most of us, by far the great majority of us, are heterosexual and expected to live in marriage relationships.

Marriage is a holy estate. If your children ask you about events in the Episcopal Church, be clear that most human beings are heterosexual and fall in love with a person of the opposite gender. There can be no question about that. Occasionally, let me repeat that word "occasionally," in the human experience, some people are gay or lesbian. That may be one way of describing, in general, the recognition of the Episcopal Church this summer.

However, that recognition takes nothing whatsoever from the institution of marriage or family. The Episcopal Church expects her members to live in faithful, committed relationships. The typical, customary, and far most common relationship of commitment is Christian marriage.

Maybe folks think that the Episcopal Church has lost a piece of its marriage theology, or that we do not honor marriage. That is simply not true. Our service of marriage is one of the most beautiful liturgies we pray. Many of us were married with these words. For some of us, those were the very words that brought us into the Episcopal Church.

I want a church that stands for grace and truth (from John 1.14, as someone wisely quoted in my Bible Study Tuesday morning). But no one of us has all that truth all at once; and only God has enough grace to cover us all. We learn from each other, and we need each other. The votes of this summer's General Convention have indicated wide disagreement on the issue of homosexuality. That is okay. I believe we can live with that. In fact, I know we can live, and worship, and work, even in the midst of that disagreement.

Finally, I know that many of us have made mistakes, and will make mistakes, in our ongoing disagreements, votes, and discussions. We need God's grace to cover us safely in this next chapter of the Church's life. We will think, and say, and sometimes act on, things that we should not have. Let us pray for one another. Let us hear one another. Let us remember that wise, and key, verse from Ephesians: "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."